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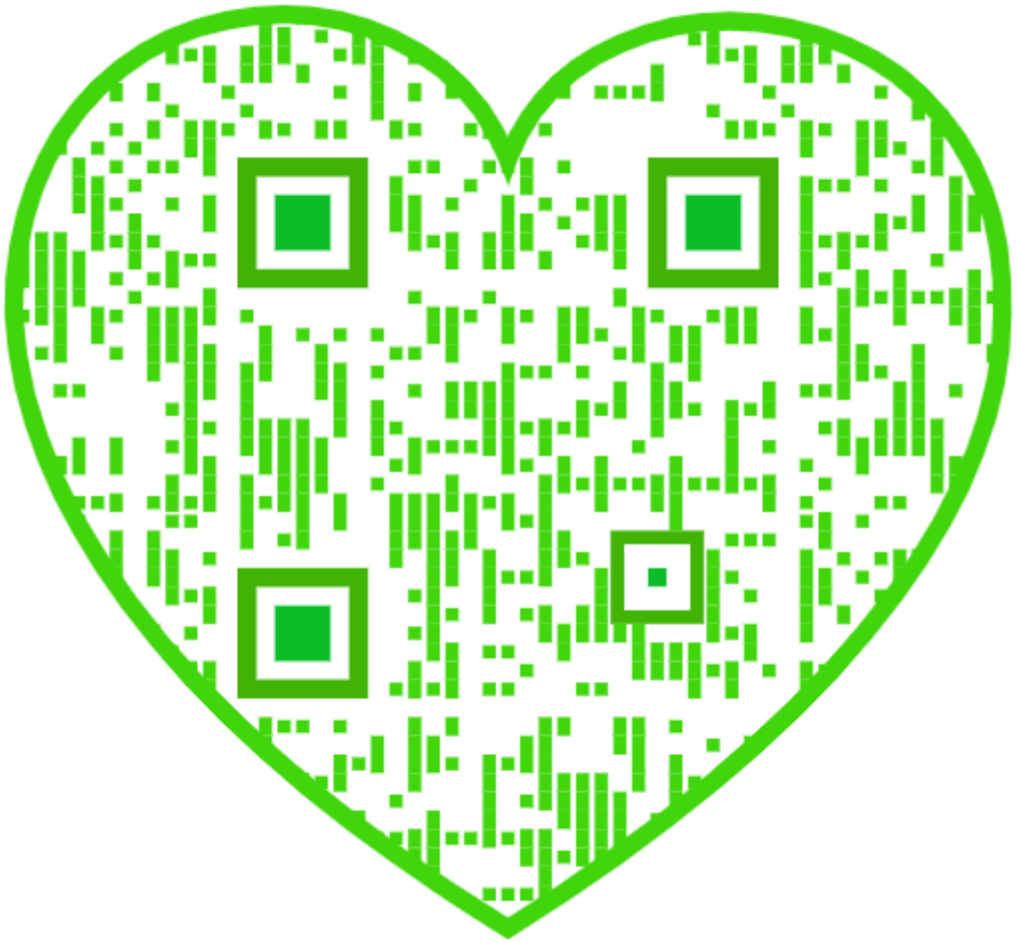
Christmas Thoughts

AND CAROL

BY

L. H. M.



Christmas Thoughts

AND

Carol

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Mrs. Lydia L. H. Marvin.

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Our God is Light—our God is Love!
In Him we are, and live, and move.
Life, Love, and Light,
Broke over all our world on Christmas night

—o—

CAROL.

In a lowly cell
Some peasants dwell,
But their guest is the Angel Gabriel;

And a rocky cave,
Which the meek beasts gave,
Houses and shelters One Mighty to Save.

Poor is the spot
In Judah's lot,
But David's city its King hath got

And the simple swains
On the hilly plains
Of Bethlehem, listen to heavenly strains.

Rude is the bed
Where the cattle have fed,
And the pillow of hay for the Royal Head.

While Mary's hands
Have fashioned the bands
To swathe His form Who the world commands.

Meek is the Maid,
Sometime afraid,
Yet in her bosom her Lord is laid.

Lowliest she,
In humility,
Blessed forever her name shall be.

Behold Him! this Child
So gentle and mild,
Clothed in humanity undefiled;

An infant of days!
Yet lost as we gaze
In wonder, we worship, adore Him, and praise.

. . . . . .

A little space—
Stand by, with reverent face—
The glory of the Lord fills all the place;
Now, in that scene of meekest majesty
Behold one form of gentlest gifts and grace—
She cometh, see—
The mother of my Lord! Ah, whence is this to me?

Thou, whom hierarch addressing
Called thee blessed, whence is thy blessing?
What the words thy bliss expressing?

Among the saints of Paradise she dwells,
  Who shared the mystery of that birth divine.
It may be many a holy tale she tells
  Of angel visitant and heavenly sign,
And things to them and us on earth were sealed,
Are in those blessed shades by converse sweet revealed.

And near—if kindred thought stir realms above,
  If friend choose friend in all that loving throng—
Nearest are they who know a mother's love;
  With *her* they muse, or, as they join in song,
Those safe and happy prisons softly dim,
Ring with the full glad strains of *her* own holy hymn.

But we, who here remain,
Who share thy pain,
Sweet saint, for thou hast known
Great sorrows for thine own;
Who share in measure
Thy heights of raptured pleasure;
A mother's bliss, a mother's woe,
For who has this, that too must know—
We, too, would learn of thee,
And sharers of thy grace and wisdom be.

We see the blessed *Maiden* now
With lilies on her breast and brow,
Nor deem the soft, seraphic smile
But fancy or the poet's wile;
We can but think her fair and sweet
Who was for such high honor meet.

O, Wonderful, Mysterious Hour!
Of that supreme, o'ershadowing Power!
Still sealed from men's and angels' thought
The secret then in silence wrought—
We only know that fallen men
Were raised and new created then.

Perhaps the maid in holy calm
Devoutly sang prophetic psalm;
Perhaps her simple daily prayer
Was rising on the hallowed air;
What time the Angel's "Ave," near,
At once awoke and soothed her fear.

But perfectly to know God's will
Was all her thought and care; and still
A gentle peace, a holy rest

Will fill the timid, troubled breast
Of her who cries, with faith restored,
"Behold the handmaid of the Lord!"

. . . . . .

Now, Mary, *Mother*, on thine arm
Thy baby lies, and thou from harm
Dost think His little form to keep,
Dost lull Him to His quiet sleep.
Thou knowest every little art,
All tender pulses stir thy heart.

So like all other mothers, thou;
Thy babe like other babes—yet how
Unlike, for this is free from sin.
As fair without, so pure within,
No naughty passion e'er shall trace
Its marks upon that infant face.

No germ of evil thought is there,
No sinful lisp shall give thee care.

In sweet obedience to grow
Is His,—and thine His love to know;
Conforming to thy soft behest—
Oh! Mary, Mother, thou art blest.

Yet many a mother, too, may dare
To hope in kind that bliss to share,
For God's unchanging word is given
To send the Holy Ghost from heaven,
To meet her at the sacred tryst
And make her baby like the Christ.

And sweet indeed it is to know—
Though stormy gusts of passion blow,
Though Satan and the world beguile,
And fleshly lusts will still defile,
Though sin the little soul must touch—
His kingdom is made up of such.

That Holy Child!--who can but dream
At times of all those things that seem
So briefly told in Holy Writ?
With chosen comrade did he sit
To learn at Jewish Rabbi's feet
The lore of Jewish children meet?

Or join to play, with childish grace,
The children in the market-place?
Perfect, yet perfectly a child,
We are not by our dreams beguiled;
To think He shared the thoughts and glee
Of innocence and infancy.

Yet many a hint in word and mien
The thoughtful mother must have seen,
And wondrous things she held apart
And kept and pondered in her heart;
Her Child by angel hosts adored
She must have known to be her Lord.

She must have seen the glory shine
Upon that human face divine;
A mother oft will think to see
An earnest, tender gravity
Within her baby's smile and eyes,
Till in an ecstacy she cries:

" Where hast thou been? What hast thou seen?
My pretty one, what doth it mean? "

That look so clear, so calm, so cool,
Like sudden depth of mountain pool;
We thought to fathom ere we knew
How far below the mosses grew.

. . . . . .

We turn—the prophet by the Lord
Hath spoken of a piercing sword—
A sword!—a cross! Ah! woe and pain
For Him;—for her the torturing *strain*
Of tenderest love and sympathy,
Which to the human soul may be.

And ever since, in every land
The weeping Rachels throng and stand,
And pierce the heavens through and through.
If but to catch *one faintest* view.
It is not this that layeth low,
But ah! this sword, it *cutteth* so!

Lift up your hearts—we lift them up—
The while we taste the bitter cup,

The while we mourn and miss our own,
To Mary's child upon the throne—
The rainbow round about appears,
And smiles are mingled with our tears.

. . . . . .

The heart hath its own bitterness—
Its secret grief doth not confess—
Yet, doth its own peculiar joy,
Its soft beatitude employ
To Mary in the world of bliss,
A solemn, sacred joy is this.

The while she joins the ransomed throng
Who swell the new, the glorious song;
Adores the love which claims for brother
Who do His will, for sister, mother,
The while each high and holy theme
Doth thought engage and lips beseem.

She feels with rapture, deep and awed,
What none can know but her and God—

Who thus her low estate prefers—
The Only Son of God is *hers;*
Through her He was to us as well,
To her, indeed, Immanuel!

. . . . . .

We sometimes draw the perfumed breath
Of flowrets all too sweet for death,
Or see some lovely passing view
We fain would keep forever new,
Or hear some softly floating strain
Of notes we'd hold to hear more plain—

Like these the love that's born with life,
That e'er distraught by earthly strife,
Encircles all its early years,
And lives upon the smiles and tears
Of childhood's brief and fleeting span;
For, if the child became a man—

Parental love hath varied range,
Then comes the ripened interchange

Of thought with thought, as friend with friend,
Whose joys with memories sweetly blend,
Yet are those tender dews exhaled
Which in the early morn prevailed.

Save only when her darling dies
The mother smiles amid her sighs,
And often in her keenest pain
At thoughts she cannot well explain,
Her brooding joy she loseth never,
She *hath her little child forever*.

. . . . . .

Only, dear Lord, unto the end
Our sealed treasure we commend
To thee, who, if we wake or sleep,
Our loved and thine will safely keep;
And when Thou dost the gift restore,
Our trials past, our sorrows o'er,
With opened box of odors sweet,
We'll fall to worship at Thy feet.

At Jesus' feet—come roving thought,
This magnet centre thou hast sought,
Nor fail through self-distracting care
To point thy trembling index there;
Let pains and joys and hopes of thine,
My soul, but lead thee to this shrine.

At Jesus' feet! Yes! there we bow
With Shepherds at the manger now;
At Jesus' feet we'll worship when,
With all the ransomed race of men,
With all the hosts of heaven, we cry
All glory be to God on High!

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